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## “Violence and Press Incendiarism”: Media and Labor Conflicts in the 1909 Strike<sup>1</sup>

*“I punished Sheba because he is a traitor to the Japanese people . . .  
I’m glad I did it and I am only sorry I didn’t do a better job of it.  
I have punished Sheba and now I’m ready to pay for it.”<sup>2</sup>*

ON A BRIGHT August morning in 1910, a young man named Tomokichi Mori stood waiting outside the U.S. District Court House in downtown Honolulu, with a pocketknife in hand that he had sharpened to a “razor-like edge.”<sup>3</sup> Mori had traveled to Honolulu from Maui, where he served as an interpreter for the Circuit Court in Wailuku. But his presence on the corner of King and Smith Streets had nothing to do with business. He was there for a more personal and ultimately more nefarious matter. As Mori patiently bided his time, a middle-aged Japanese man emerged from the attorney general’s office. Mori immediately recognized him as Sometaro Shiba, the editor of the *Hawaii Shinpo*, one of the major Japanese-language newspapers in Hawai‘i.<sup>4</sup> Seeing his target, Mori quickly approached Shiba and accused him of being a “traitor” to his people, a charge that stemmed from Shiba’s close relationship with the powerful sugar planters who dominated the political, social, and economic landscape of the Islands. Mori also criticized Shiba for selling out the

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Japanese community in Hawai‘i, as Shiba had publicly condemned the thousands of Japanese workers across the various plantations on O‘ahu who had walked off their jobs to protest their low pay in what became the largest island-wide strike.<sup>5</sup> As Shiba turned away from Mori in an attempt to avoid a verbal confrontation, Mori lunged at Shiba’s throat with his blade, barely missing Shiba’s jugular vein and carotid artery but opening a gash a half-inch deep. When Mori swung again, the blade grazed Shiba’s scalp and left a wound an inch and a half in length before the tip of the blade broke. Before shocked onlookers could intervene, Mori inflicted two more cuts on Shiba’s left arm, at which point Shiba finally succeeded in wrestling Mori to the ground. As Mori’s later court testimony revealed, he felt no remorse for attacking Shiba due to Shiba’s “traitorous” activities in the course of the 1909 strike, a strike that divided the Japanese community over the question of higher wages for Japanese laborers on the sugar plantations. While this bloody altercation was clearly a personal attack against Shiba by Mori, it ultimately involved the newspapermen of the ethnic and white presses, the leading attorneys of the territory, the planters, the Japanese consulate and territorial officials, and the workers themselves. The 1909 strike was notable not just as the largest strike in Hawai‘i to date, but also as a flashpoint for raising issues that polarized the Japanese and white communities. It resulted in heated clashes in the newspapers, courtrooms, and on the streets that culminated in outbreaks of violence, such as Mori’s vicious attack on Shiba. It would establish critical precedents in the ways authorities responded to the 1920 strike and later the internment of Japanese leaders in the Islands during World War II by targeting select individuals to break the leadership of the Japanese community.

#### HAWAI‘I’S EARLY STRIKE HISTORY

Racial tensions between Japanese laborers on the plantations and the white plantation owners had slowly grown since the arrival of the first large group of Japanese immigrants over a quarter of a century earlier. Lynching victim Katsu Gotō was one of these *Gannenmono* or “first-year men” who migrated to the Islands in 1868 in response to the growing labor needs, and his death was reflective of the tensions that existed on the plantations.<sup>6</sup> His lynching was designed to weaken

Japanese resistance through the highly visualized brutalization of a Japanese male, a man who had challenged white plantation control by supporting workers' efforts against an exploitative capitalist system on the plantations. Following the United States' annexation of Hawai'i, workers' failure to abide by the terms of a labor contract was no longer a criminal offense—workers could no longer be arrested for protesting against harsh labor conditions or terms—and this shift unleashed an "epidemic" of labor conflicts.<sup>7</sup> In 1900 alone, thirty-one labor strikes occurred on the various plantations in the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>8</sup> However, these strikes were generally confined to a limited locality, often lasted just a few days, and received little attention in the press.<sup>9</sup> Yet, in 1907, the governments of Japan and America enacted a treaty called the Gentleman's Agreement Act, which prohibited the migration of workers from Hawai'i to the mainland United States. This single piece of legislation dramatically affected the fortunes of laborers, who could no longer escape to better working conditions or higher pay and instead were forced to confront plantation managers with their complaints, which soon escalated into major strike movements.

In 1909, Japanese workers initiated a strike on the island of O'ahu which "in every respect . . . was the most important labor conflict that had ever occurred in Hawaii up to that date."<sup>10</sup> It marked a fundamental shift from previous labor movements in its character and impact, as it extended far beyond the plantations to involve the planter elite, high-ranking government authorities, and influential leaders within the Japanese community. Unlike previous strikes, this particular work stoppage was the result of nearly eight months of deliberations, meetings, and discussions by Japanese plantation workers on the issue of their salaries and their need to increase them. It was also remarkable for its scope and scale, as it became an island-wide strike involving Japanese laborers from the various plantations on O'ahu. This strike not only resulted in nearly \$2,000,000 in losses for plantation owners, but also led to the arrest of prominent Japanese newspaper editors, reporters, and lawyers who officials charged with conspiracy to initiate violence on behalf of their cause; they were held responsible for the various riots and disturbances that occurred and for the attempted murder of Shiba.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, the planters broke the strike but made a number of concessions to laborers, including higher wages, bet-

ter housing facilities, and improved sanitation conditions. However, it was the leaders of the strike who bore the brunt of the planters' wrath. They were tried and found guilty of conspiracy, sentenced to ten months in O'ahu Prison, and fined \$300 in a legal system that served planter interests.

ORIGINS OF THE STRIKE AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF  
"UNINTELLIGIBLE IDEOGRAPHS" IN THE  
JAPANESE-LANGUAGE PRESS<sup>12</sup>

Although the 1909 strike officially began in May of that year and continued throughout the latter part of the following summer, the strike itself originated in a series of newspaper articles published nearly a year earlier. These articles publicized the demeaning and dehumanizing conditions endured by the Japanese laborers, who worked on the plantations for minimal pay with little recourse, as they were subjected to the restrictive terms of the 1907 Gentleman's Agreement Act, a topic of heated criticism in the Japanese-language newspapers. At the turn of the century, Hawai'i supported a foreign-language press unparalleled in size and diversity among agricultural communities based upon immigrant labor. The Japanese community alone published eleven Japanese-language newspapers, which possessed diverse viewpoints and a wide distribution across the Islands.<sup>13</sup> While there are few records about the numbers of copies printed, newspaper scholar Helen Geracimos Chapin argues for a large readership as "the papers were passed from reader to reader, plantation camp to plantation camp, and island to island."<sup>14</sup> 'Aiea plantation strike leader Seisaku Kawahara, who was active in the 1909 strike, recalled that laborers "used to gather around . . . [and] pool their resources" to purchase the *Nippu Jiji* as most laborers could not afford the daily fifty-nine cents cost of the newspaper.<sup>15</sup> At one sitting, nearly thirty people would "get together and read these things that the paper had put out" for the benefit of the "illiterates" in the group.<sup>16</sup> Published as dailies, weeklies, biweeklies, and monthlies in Japanese or in Japanese and English, these papers were purchased by immigrants who had a nearly seventy percent literacy rate and who read not just Japanese but also rudimentary Hawaiian and English. Chapin argues that most Japanese did not read dominant white-owned newspapers, such as the

*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* and the *Evening Bulletin*, but instead preferred to read publications from the Japanese-language press. These papers not only informed readers of significant local and international events, but also played an important role in maintaining cultural ties to Japan while acculturating immigrants to new social practices and customs.<sup>17</sup> However, the Japanese-language press was by no means uniform in its editorial views, as the newspapers divided “according to class and political interests: from politically conservative and counseling caution to moderate and fence straddling, to the more radical that seek improved conditions for its people in the new land.”<sup>18</sup> To the white establishment, however, the Japanese press was a specter threatening its political and economic control over the Islands. In his comprehensive study of Japanese newspapers in Hawai‘i, scholar Shunzō Sakamaki observed that dominant whites suspected “all those unintelligible ideographs of the Japanese language papers” of promoting “anti-Americanism” among Hawai‘i’s large Japanese population. They considered them “hiding places for a sinister move to oust American control from these islands.”<sup>19</sup>

To many, these fears became realized when the ethnic newspapers began publicizing the harsh working and substandard living conditions endured by Japanese laborers for low pay. On 25 August 1908, the Japanese-language daily *Hawaii Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, edited by Hanzo Tsurushima, printed an article by Gunkichi Shimada, who had traveled to all the islands of Hawai‘i to gather material for a book. From his research and observations, Shimada pointed out that “prices had recently increased more than 20 percent, but that the wage of the Japanese laborer, if he worked 26 days a month, did not exceed \$18.00, and this made it difficult for him to gain a livelihood.”<sup>20</sup> This article attracted the attention of a young man, Motoyuki Negoro, a recent graduate of a California law school, who had returned to Hawai‘i only to discover that, as an alien, he was unable to practice law. After reading Shimada’s article, Negoro wrote a long treatise entitled “How About The Higher Wages,” which began by stating that “we regret that wages in Hawaii are disproportionately low in comparison with the large profits.”<sup>21</sup> Negoro argued that the Japanese government should intercede for Japanese laborers, “for the Japanese government is well aware that its subjects are not born to be slaves of the capitalists of Hawaii.” Negoro first took his article to Shiba, of the *Hawaii*

*Shinpo*, who rejected the material as unsuitable and unpublishable. Subsequently, Negoro brought his work to Yasutaro Soga, publisher and editor of the *Nippu Jiji*. As Soga recalled, "I read it and found the argument splendid and just. I willingly consented to publish it." Thereafter, the piece began to run serially in the *Nippu Jiji*, its positions fully supported by the paper.

The first call to action therefore came from the newspaper *Nippu Jiji*, which printed Negoro's article, entitled "The Higher Wages Question," on 31 July 1908. Soga had already been instrumental in leading opposition to the emigration company banks and their exploitation of the workers' deposits, and now he joined in the fight to raise wages by printing Negoro's work. Emphasizing that "the time is ripe," Negoro called for laborers to "recover the lost liberty of choosing and changing their place of abode and become a full-fledged man and to be in a position to earn a just reward for their labor."<sup>22</sup> Negoro criticized the prohibition against Japanese migration to America and pointed out that the taxes levied on the worker and the rapidly escalating price of goods had further reduced the income of the Japanese plantation workers, already the lowest paid in the industry, to little more than \$18 per month.<sup>23</sup> The article sparked considerable discussion and debate among the urban residents of Honolulu, particularly among the leaders of the Japanese-language press, who then divided on the issue of higher wages for Japanese plantation laborers.

The *Nippu Jiji*, with a circulation of 1,000, along with the *Maui Shimbun* (Wailuku, Maui), the *Shokumin Shinbun* (Hilo, Hawai'i), the *Kona Echo* (Hōlualoa, Hawai'i), and the *Oahu Jiho* (Waipahu, O'ahu), advocated for higher wages. They were considered "radicals" for their support of decisive and immediate action and for maintaining that the grievances of the Japanese plantation laborers—which included low wages, poor housing, unsanitary conditions, and other discriminatory treatment—could only be remedied by means of collective bargaining.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the "conservatives," which included the *Hawaii Shinpo* (Honolulu, Hawai'i), *Hawaiian-Japanese Daily Chronicle* (Honolulu, Hawai'i), *Kauai Shinpo* (Lihue, Kaua'i), *Hilo Shinpo* (Hilo, Hawai'i), *Kainan Shinpo* (Hilo, Hawai'i), and *Maui Hochi* (Waihihiken, Maui), supported a more judicious and cautious approach when dealing with the planters because they pointed out that "Japanese laborers are no longer allowed to migrate to Hawaii" with the enactment

of the Gentleman’s Agreement Act.<sup>25</sup> In light of this labor shortage, “reckless action on the part of the Japanese residents in Hawaii might possibly lead to a situation where the planters will turn to European laborers to replace the Japanese working on the plantations.”<sup>26</sup> They believed that differences between the laborers and the planters should be settled without striking, and they supported industrial conciliation rather than collective action or public demonstration.

The higher wages article was the first in a series of reports that appeared in the *Nippu Fiji*, and the issue of better pay for Japanese workers soon turned into an extremely controversial subject that provoked “bitter verbal warfare” between two contending parties—the *Nippu Fiji* and its associates on one hand, and the *Hawaii Shinpo* and its allies on the other. The *Nippu Fiji* regarded the *Hawaii Shinpo* and its conservative colleagues as traitors to the Japanese of Hawai‘i, while the coalition led by the *Hawaii Shinpo* labeled the *Nippu Fiji* and its associates agitators and peace disturbers. In light of these divisions within the Japanese community, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (later



The Higher Wage Association, Honolulu, Hawai‘i. From left: front, Matsutari Yamashiro, Yasutaro Soga, Kinzaburo Makino, Motoyuki Negoro, Yokiichi Tasaka; back, Yasuyuki Imai, Tsurumatsu Okumura, Katsuichi Kawamoto, Hidekichi Takemura, Keitaro Kawamura, Shuichi Ihara. 1909. Bishop Museum.



the *Honolulu Advertiser*) and the *Evening Bulletin* (later the *Honolulu-Star Bulletin*), which represented planter interests, subsequently dismissed the demand for higher wages and the threat of an impending strike as “a species of mild pleasantry” and a “wild bluff.”<sup>27</sup>

The consensus among most Japanese workers, however, was that a wage increase was imperative. Despite efforts by community members to bring together the two opposing newspapers, the *Nippu Jiji* and *Hawaii Shinpo* remained on opposing sides of the labor controversy, with their editors, Soga and Shiba, heading the separate factions. In December 1908, at the Japanese YMCA building in Honolulu, a group of leading Japanese officials formed an organization called *Zōkyū Kisei Kai*, or the Higher Wage Association, with its unofficial headquarters located at the Yamashiro Hotel on Beretania Street, across from A‘ala Park.<sup>28</sup> Participants in the meeting elected Kinzaburo “Fred” Makino, Motoyuki Negoro, and Matsutaro Yamashiro chairman, secretary, and treasurer, respectively. As one of their first courses of action, these leaders of the Higher Wage Association created a formal list of demands accompanied by impressive documen-



Motoyuki Negoro, secretary of the Higher Wage Association, speaking to the strikers in ‘Aiea, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. 1909. Bishop Museum.



tation and an explanation of their position. Arguing that "the Japanese here are not coolies," they claimed that workers "are entitled to demand equal wages as the labor of other nationalities."<sup>29</sup> In light of the twenty-five percent increase in the cost of basic necessities, they maintained that the demand for a wage of \$22.50 or more was neither extravagant nor "unreasonable."<sup>30</sup> Calling for an end to all racial pay gradations—Filipino cane cutters, for example, were paid only \$.69 in average wages per day in 1910, as compared to \$.99 for Japanese cane cutters; English blacksmiths earned \$3.79 in average wages per day, while Japanese blacksmiths made only \$1.48—and the establishment of standard pay scales for each job, the association also demanded improvements to churches, schools, and basic housing, which were all "utterly unfit for married men, or for bringing up their children, both for the sanitary and moral points of view."<sup>31</sup> *Nippu Jiji* editor Soga, a member of the Higher Wage Association, described the dwellings of the laborers as "filthy" and "unsanitary," noting that it would be more proper to describe them as "pig sties" than as houses. To give one example, he cited the Wai'anae plantation for having "baths in the open" and "the unseemly sight of men going to them stark naked and the women clad only in loin cloths."<sup>32</sup> Soga detailed how many camps often lacked basic sewage and waste facilities, resulting in "a certain unbearably foul smell" that hung in the air "on all the sugar plantations throughout the islands."<sup>33</sup> Soga was outraged at the conditions endured by Japanese laborers, and he used the *Nippu Jiji* to publicize the plight of workers and to garner support for the cause.

A description of the poor physical conditions of the camps was included in a formal report by the Higher Wages Association that requested planters to give high priority to improvements. The organization presented the letter and voluminous supporting documents to the directors of the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) in January 1909, and the workers waited for a response. The directors did not acknowledge the letter or accompanying papers, as they had adopted a policy of complete silence, refusing to recognize in any way the existence of the Higher Wage Association. After waiting patiently for nearly five months without receiving any reply, workers began to walk off their jobs during the month of May, beginning at the 'Aiea plantation and spreading to the more remote plantations on O'ahu. By the end of the month, some seven thousand workers were on strike.

## THE 1909 STRIKE

Confronted for the first time with the prospect of an island-wide labor movement, the planters now faced the possibility of incurring serious economic losses given the scope of the strike and the difficulty of replacing so many strikers with strikebreakers. On 10 May 1909, the trustees of the HSPA moved to meet this threat by adopting a loss-sharing agreement to spread the financial losses from the strike to all the member plantations. As labor historian Edward Beechert explained, "The losses of the struck plantations were to be met by an assessment of the production of each member plantation and paid to those showing losses."<sup>34</sup> This strategy showcased the shared interests of all the plantations in crushing this particular strike and in ending any future labor movements that threatened the hegemony of the planters. That this strike involved Japanese workers particularly alarmed the planters since at the time the Japanese constituted nearly forty-two percent of the total population in Hawai'i and comprised a significant portion of the labor force on the plantations.<sup>35</sup>

On 22 May, the HSPA announced that it would not discuss wages or working conditions with any organization until all work resumed. Workers who did not return immediately would be discharged and evicted from the plantation camps. When striking laborers ignored this declaration, the planters began to institute mass evictions, first at 'Aiea and then at Waipahu. Lacking living quarters, workers began erecting a number of makeshift camps in and around Honolulu and Waipahu. Evicted families, particularly those with children, were partially assisted with monies from a small strike fund that the Higher Wage Association had established for such purposes, eventually totaling nearly \$42,000.<sup>36</sup> By 24 May, the Higher Wage Association was supporting about 3,500 strikers.<sup>37</sup> Many of the striking laborers had lived in plantation housing and, despite substandard housing facilities, remained at the mercy of the planters given that their low wages barely exceeded household expenditures. Many Japanese families earned just enough to support their families and were always at the threshold of poverty and debt.

As soon as the strikers poured into Honolulu from the various plantations, Consul General Senichi Uyeno issued an official notice on 25 May, expressing his regret that the laborers had gone on strike and

urging them to return peacefully to work. He repeated his statement three weeks later at a gathering at the Honolulu Theater, where he encouraged attending laborers to go back to the plantations.<sup>38</sup> Uyeno believed that a peaceful and conciliatory course of action would be more effective in settling the higher-wage issue. He further stressed to the laborers the absolute necessity of conducting nonviolent and orderly protests as violence and labor agitation would disturb the peace and order of the community and threaten the economic life of the Japanese in Hawai'i. This proclamation was, in the words of one scholar, of "no avail," as striking workers continued to gather in Honolulu and as the HSPA passed a resolution just two days later on 27 May, affirming that the association would not grant the requests of strikers for the duration of the strike.<sup>39</sup>

In response to Uyeno's statements, the leaders of the strike accused him of intervening "for the benefit of the Hawaiian planters" and blindly following the advice of the "planters' dogs" while ignoring the "good reputation" and the "benefit of the Japanese."<sup>40</sup> The officers of the Higher Wage Association soundly denounced Uyeno as an "office man" and "incompetent," while his statements were widely publicized in both the English- and Japanese-language presses and used to encourage the return of workers to the plantations.<sup>41</sup>

Although many scholars have considered the role of the consul in the strike as peripheral or inconsequential, it is clear that Uyeno actively supported the control of Japanese labor, closely monitored the situation, and strongly desired the return of the laborers to the plantations.<sup>42</sup> Uyeno hardly acted as an impartial observer to the strike, and he represented yet another obstacle to the strike movement and the recognition of workers' demands. Despite Negoro's original appeal to the Japanese government, the consulate did not support collective labor movements. Even prior to the strike, Uyeno had become subject to public slander as a result of his role in establishing controls over workers.<sup>43</sup> In 1903, the consul was the president of the Central Japanese League, an organization established to "prevent the emigration of the Japanese to the States" and committed to "temper their aggressiveness."<sup>44</sup> The purpose of the League was to "act as a conciliation board in all matters of dispute between laborers and their employers," and it "absolutely opposed" strikes as "the doings of unruly children or like the act of barbarians, rather than of civilized

men.”<sup>45</sup> Although the passage of the 1907 Gentleman’s Agreement Act successfully accomplished one of the goals of the League, the consul evidently still remained active in suppressing strikes and “all other violent acts” six years later, when Japanese workers ranked among the lowest paid laborers on the plantations.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the strike, the planters benefited from the support of the Japanese consulate and its solidarity against laborers. They remained in close communication with one another and presented a united front. In contrast, the Japanese community was rife with divisions as neither the workers nor the leaders had any experience in organizing a strike.<sup>47</sup> The strike effort was also weakened by a lack of wider community support, since it involved only Japanese laborers. As noted in 1910 by the commissioner of labor, “a strike conducted on exclusively national lines can hardly succeed in Hawaii,” as employers are “too well organized, disciplined, and financed.”<sup>48</sup> According to Beechert, “no appeals, other than one for general support, were made to other groups of workers.”<sup>49</sup> That most of the petitions were printed in the Japanese language and were couched in traditional Japanese terms, appealing to the spirit of Japanese nationalism, ensured that they would be read only by a small number of individuals and garner a limited amount of support from other groups. In fact, the homogenous ethnic character of the strike was used against the workers as the HSPA hired Chinese, Hawaiian, Portuguese, and Korean strikebreakers at a rate of \$1.50 a day to undermine the efforts and the morale of the Japanese strikers. The use of ethnic workers, particularly those antagonistic to the Japanese, became a fairly common practice as planters hired strikebreakers in Honolulu and transported them to Waipahu and ‘Aiea on special trains that were draped with banners proclaiming the end of the strike. Although there was never a large pool of unemployed sugar workers that could be summoned for short periods of time during the strike, this was an important tactic in weakening Japanese morale.

#### IMPRISONMENT OF THE LEADERS AND THE ENSUING “PRESS WAR”<sup>50</sup>

Planters employed another important strategy, the legal harassment of the strike leaders and their supporters. Government officials and plantation owners were a close-knit and well-connected group, due to

shared economic and political interests. The same powerful relationships extended into the courtroom, providing more evidence of the dual system of justice in Hawai'i, which was exercised with varying degrees of success to control the Japanese and other minorities. The law served as a tool for the plantation owners in their attempts to establish economic and legal control over the lives of the immigrant workers. According to Beechert, persecution under the law became a common course of action for employers in future strikes until labor finally won recognition after World War II.<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the strike, the Higher Wage Association urged restraint against radical action, reminding workers to "do no act of violence. This is a model strike. Be united."<sup>52</sup> Various warnings ran in the *Nippu Fiji*, and Makino and Negoro made personal appeals to laborers against the use of force, threatening violators with exclusion from the movement.<sup>53</sup> Although individual workers did engage in incidences of violence, the leaders of the Higher Wage Association immediately condemned these actions; the English-language presses nonetheless linked the strike movement and any violence to the incendiary articles written in the Japanese newspapers. On 26 May 1909, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported that a non-striking Japanese laborer named Tsuchiya Giichi from the 'Ewa plantation near Honouliuli was "badly handed by four thugs, who broke his arm, made ugly bruises on his back and just over his kidneys, damaged his face and lamed his legs."<sup>54</sup> As a result of the attack on this "loyal laborer," who was hospitalized with severe injuries, officials arrested and detained twenty-one Japanese strikers without warrants.<sup>55</sup>

Immediately after the incident, Makino issued an open letter to Sheriff William P. Jarrett that was publicized in the newspapers. He expressed his "extreme regret" for Giichi's assault. He assured the sheriff "that the Higher Wage Association is in no way responsible for the fight" and that it "from the beginning of the strike has always urged the Japanese to avoid any breach [*sic*] of the peace."<sup>56</sup> On the same day, Walter G. Smith, editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, wrote an editorial titled "Violence and Press Incendiarism," which derided Makino's professions of innocence. Smith claimed that "it is useless for the leaders of the Higher Wage Association to try and clear themselves of moral responsibility for the assault on the strikebreaker Giichi."<sup>57</sup> Smith conceded, "They may not have sent or even known

the criminals who tried to do the man to death"; moreover, Smith acknowledged "that they knew nothing in advance of the plan to maim or slay the victim." However, Smith asserted, "they have supported and still support a policy which their newspaper organ expresses for them, of malevolent hatred toward the laborers who have not struck or who prefer work to agitation." According to Smith, "the epithets 'dog' and 'pig' applied to conservative Japanese," as well as appeals to the "sword" and the "hammer," combined with "half-veiled threats against the lives of opponents" and "the quoting of vernacular poetry which suggest bloodshed as a means of carrying one's point," have stirred "homicidal blood among the more ignorant, vicious and impetuous strikers." Smith claimed that "but for the incitement of the Higher Wage organ, edited by one of the strike triumvirate, Giichi would doubtless be at work today instead of lying half-dead in the hospital." Smith argued that the violence committed by the laborers could be directly attributed to the editorial content of the *Nippu Jiji* and the speeches made by the Higher Wage Association leaders.

Another disturbance more than a week later in west O'ahu seemed once more to confirm these allegations of criminality on the part of the strike movement leaders, who continued to publish "incendiary" material. Police arrested thirteen Japanese laborers and charged them with rioting at Waipahu on 8 June 1909.<sup>58</sup> According to Eugene M. Scoville, an employee of the Oahu Sugar Company who was acting as a special police officer that day, between "two and three hundred" Japanese were following a laborer who had decided to return to work. They "rushed forward and jumped upon this Japanese . . . and then started hitting him over the head with their hands."<sup>59</sup> Along with "Officer Wills," Scoville went to the assistance of the laborer who was being beaten by the angry mob. The two forced their way into the crowd of Japanese who "were hollering and making a great deal of noise," and then the mob "attempted to rush us, closed in on us." To gain control of the situation, Wills drew his revolver and fired a shot into the air. Scoville pulled his own gun out, and recalled that "they jumped back," but one striker came forward and said to him, "I no afraid, shoot, shoot me, I no care, suppose I *make* [die]; plenty more Japanese stop." According to newspaper accounts, "Japs" came at them "through holes and doors and alleyways."<sup>60</sup> Eventually the men were able to escape, but not before August Spillner and his son,



who had come to their assistance, were attacked by "about 200 or more . . . [Japanese who] chased us up the road and fired stones and sticks after us."<sup>61</sup> It took 34 regular police officers and deputies, "each armed with carbine and revolver," to restore order in Waipahu.<sup>62</sup> This incident was sensationalized in the press as an example of Japanese violence and disorder. During the trial of the suspected riot leaders, though, Scoville was forced to admit upon cross-examination by attorney Joseph Lightfoot that no violence against whites occurred as "they didn't club us . . . [or] lay their hands on me."<sup>63</sup>

During the rioting trial, prosecutors also charged two of the defendants with alleged participation in a "bold" kidnapping in broad daylight of a returning laborer by the name of Tsunoda.<sup>64</sup> Although Lightfoot tried to persuade the court to release his clients, known only as Fuehino and Kawakami, on writs of habeas corpus, he was ultimately unsuccessful. Lightfoot could not locate Judge William T. Robinson at either his home or at the office, had his appeals denied by Judge John T. De Bolt, and was unsuccessful in scheduling an audience with Uyeno, who "declined to see him or allow any representative of the consulate to talk about the matter with him."<sup>65</sup> The trial, which began on 25 June, eventually resulted in a guilty conviction for all thirteen defendants.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, on 10 June 1909, two days after the riot, William Henry arrested editor Soga and reporters Yokichi Tasaka and Keitaro Kawamura of the *Nippu Jiji*, along with Makino and Negoro, officers of the Higher Wage Association, on charges of conspiracy as dangerous persons. Police officers also arrested Matsutaro Yamashiro, treasurer of the Association, and three more *Nippu Jiji* men. According to the indictment that was filed 12 June 1909, the accused had "committed the offence of being dangerous and disorderly persons."<sup>67</sup> Prosecutors claimed that the accused had full knowledge that "a large number of the Japanese residents of the Territory of Hawaii, more than One Thousand in number, were in an excited, turbulent, lawless and unruly condition and state of mind, and threatening to do injury to the person and property of their respective employers and others."<sup>68</sup> In the indictment, prosecutors included translations of various articles and publications of the *Nippu Jiji* and Higher Wage Association that threatened violence and death to those who challenged their cause:

Listen, Shimpo . . . you are the enemy of the Japanese . . . We will not forget forever the odious means employed by you in regard to the higher wage question . . . If you retire and quit being a publicist and take some other job, well and good . . . but as long as you are publishing a newspaper, which is an important thing, we, the laborers, will see that you are exterminated by secret or open means.<sup>69</sup>

According to the translations provided by prosecutors, the *Nippu Jiji* asserted that editor Shiba of the *Hawaii Shinpo* and his faction “care nothing for the laborers in general” and should be “prepared to die an honorable death.”<sup>70</sup> These translations served as the cornerstone of the prosecution’s case and prosecutors presented them as tangible proof of the violent tendencies of the accused. However, these translations were very controversial as the words and phrases cited by the prosecution were open to alternative translations with less radical connotations. According to scholar James Okahata, “many instances of forced literal translations of words and phrases, the equivalent of which were practically non-existent in the English language occurred which were of disadvantage to the defendants.” Okahata cited the example of the phrase, “tettsui wo kudasu,” translated verbatim as “wielding an iron-hammer.”<sup>71</sup> However, according to Okahata, “a more apt translation would have been ‘take decisive action.’” He noted that “words and phrases which had been ‘manufactured’ in the press war were also mutilated or misrepresented to the disadvantage of the defendants.” Okahata added that the official court interpreter translated “Okintama-men” as “sycophant” or “secret force,” whereas a more accurate interpretation would have been “toadying” or “traitors to the cause.”<sup>72</sup> A struggle over the meaning of Japanese words ensued and had considerable implications since each side fought to ascribe guilt or innocence based upon the intricacies and nuances of the Japanese language.

Within the strike itself, language became a contested terrain in the Japanese- and English-language presses as both sides sought to represent the “voice” of the large Japanese population and publicize the true nature of the strike and the intentions of the Higher Wage Association. While Yasutaro Soga portrayed the organization and the strike as “proper” and “reasonable,” editor Smith of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, alleged that the Higher Wage Association was

nothing more than a “private money-making *hui* [group]” which has “misled” and “deluded” the average striking worker who is “simply an ignorant peasant.”<sup>73</sup> The nuances of the Japanese language, in particular the multiple meanings for each word or phrase depending on the context or the author’s intent, led to constant conflicts in the papers. Governor Walter F. Frear personally conceded that “many Japanese words have double meanings and the radicals claimed that their newspaper articles were intended in a proper sense.”<sup>74</sup> Within the Japanese community, the translations given by the conservative newspapers sparked heated debates and highlighted the lack of consensus among the Japanese.

After the men each posted a \$1,200 bond, the authorities released the strike leaders the following day. However, on 14 June, police officers again arrested them on the charge of obstructing the operation of the sugar plantations.<sup>75</sup> The police also confiscated, without the benefit of a warrant, documents from the offices of the *Nippu Jiji* as well as from the residences and offices of strike leaders. According to Yasutaro Soga, while he was incarcerated at O’ahu Prison, he was called out to the jail yard at midnight where William Henry and interpreter Chester A. Doyle waited. They escorted him to a waiting carriage that went to the *Nippu Jiji* offices on Hotel Street, breaking and entering into locked offices and safes while others searched the residences of the men.<sup>76</sup>

After seizing potentially incriminating documents, authorities began to build their case and rushed to prosecute the defendants, who now languished in jail. The trial against the strike leaders started on 26 July in the First Circuit Court, with Judge De Bolt presiding. Lightfoot, an Englishman who was a former high school mathematics teacher and whose strength lay in his “limitless combative spirit,” represented the defendants since all of the other attorneys in Honolulu were either closely associated with the HSPA or charged prohibitively exorbitant fees.<sup>77</sup> On the opposing bench was attorney William Ansel Kinney of the law partnership of Kinney and Balthau, which the press described as “among the first in Hawaii legal circles of that day.”<sup>78</sup> Although Kinney was a private attorney who had been retained by both the HSPA and Sometaro Shiba, the territorial attorney general’s office had appointed him deputy attorney general representing the Territory in the strike case.<sup>79</sup> Kinney himself testified that he believed

that the *Nippu Jiji* had “gone to astonishing lengths in openly and continuously threatening personal violence, not only against Sheba, but any Japanese who stood out against, or in any way thwarted, the impending strike.”<sup>80</sup> Kinney asserted that “agitation” had even spread to the highest Japanese business circles in the city of Honolulu as “the Yokohama Specie Bank was in it, as well as the Japanese wholesale houses,” a radical claim that has never been proven.<sup>81</sup> Assisting Kinney were Mason Fay Prosser and Robbins B. Anderson, young lawyers from the same firm.<sup>82</sup> According to Soga, “in court they presented an imposing spectacle.”<sup>83</sup>

#### “THE STRIKE AGITATION CASE TRIAL”<sup>84</sup>

The trial lasted from 21 July to 18 August, with attorneys on both sides presenting numerous exhibits to the jury and engaging in debates over the literal translation of the articles published in the Japanese newspapers that the prosecution had submitted as evidence.<sup>85</sup> “As far as possible,” Soga attested, “the plaintiffs were inclined to force the inference of a strong, evil meaning. Each time the defendants objected and insisted upon a correction. And much time was consumed in such things.”<sup>86</sup> Professor Walter Denning, from Japan, who had a reputation of being “well-versed” in Japanese language and literature, translated the articles for the prosecution.<sup>87</sup> However, allegations of personal bias tainted the accuracy and credibility of his translations, as rumors spread through Honolulu that the HSPA had defrayed the cost of his passage to Hawai‘i from Japan and gave him an honorarium of \$2,000.<sup>88</sup>

The case against the defendants also revolved around their actions “in conducting an agitation and campaign for higher wages for Japanese laborers,” which included publishing “certain, menacing, threatening, exciting, inflammatory, insulting and abusive words, statements and articles” supporting the strike, “calculated and designed to induce violence upon and an assault against . . . S. Shiba.”<sup>89</sup> Throughout the strike, as the exchange of accusations became more heated, many strikers had focused their animosity on *Hawaii Shinpo* editor Shiba. Thereafter, Shiba became increasingly concerned about the threat of violence to himself. He not only requested police protection but also applied for a \$10,000 life insurance policy, which the planters

funded.<sup>90</sup> He had translated the *Nippu Jiji* articles for the police and the authorities used his assertion that assassination plans existed in Soga's safe at the *Nippu Jiji* office as a pretext for their illegal search and seizure. During the conspiracy trial, prosecutors charged the strike leaders with crimes against fellow Japanese, essentially protecting the rights of some Japanese at the expense of others' civil liberties. The trial effectively turned public attention away from the injustices and inequalities that existed on the plantations and focused instead on Japanese crimes against other Japanese. This selective understanding of the strike and the resulting application of the law underscored the close relationship between police, judicial, and territorial authorities and the planters; this approach also spoke to the planters' acuity in exploiting the ethnic character of the strike by shifting Japanese and public attention away from strike issues and toward the issues of differences and conflicts within the Japanese community.

Among the first on the stand in the conspiracy trial was Giichi, the



Preparing Japanese sweets for the strikers, who had left plantations and lived in temporary shelters provided for them in Kaka'ako and Mō'ili'ili, Honolulu, Hawai'i. 1909. Bishop Museum.

laborer who had been beaten for returning to his job. He testified about his assault, which prosecutors attributed to “higher wage propaganda” that had begun long before the strike.<sup>91</sup> Although defense attorney Lightfoot tried to discredit Giichi’s testimony, a brutal attack a few days later against Shiba, the leading Japanese opponent of the strike, seemed to confirm the accuracy of Giichi’s statements to the jury.

On 3 August, Tomekichi Mori, one of Makino’s former employees and a member of the Higher Wage Association, brutally attacked and stabbed editor Shiba in the neck with a pocketknife. As Shiba struggled with Mori, eventually pinning him to the ground, Elisha J. McCandless, a sign painter who was working nearby, came to Shiba’s assistance. Police took both Shiba and Mori to the police station. Later, officers drove Shiba in a patrol wagon to The Queen’s Hospital, where he lost consciousness due to the loss of blood from his wounds. After his arrest, Mori allegedly stated, “I punished Sheba because he is a traitor to the Japanese people . . . I’m glad I did it . . . and I’m only sorry I didn’t do a better job of it. I have punished Sheba, and now I’m ready to pay for it.”<sup>92</sup> News of the attack quickly spread, and the conspiracy trial was adjourned for the day on account of this violent attack, which occurred just as Negoro was testifying about his “mild and peaceable” strike methods and his admonitions against the use of violence to striking Aiea laborers.<sup>93</sup>

The attack made front-page headlines in most of the major newspapers in Honolulu, and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* portrayed the attack as an example of “what the Nippu Jiji has been preaching for months—that Sheba is a traitor to, and an enemy of, his own race and should be punished, exterminated, put out of the way.”<sup>94</sup> Although Mori was unquestionably guilty of attacking Shiba, it was uncertain if Mori had acted on his own accord or if he had been inspired by sentiments expressed by the strike leaders. The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* asserted that Mori “had been taught by Soga and Makino and Negoro and the other leaders of the Japanese strike that Sheba was a detriment to the ultimate success of the strike, a man whom the Japanese would be much better off without.”<sup>95</sup> The assault on Shiba seemed clearly to demonstrate the culpability of the strike leaders regarding the violence associated with the strike as well as the applicability of the conspiracy charges against them. Ultimately, a jury took



just six hours to find the defendants, Makino, Negoro, Soga, Tasaka, Kawamura, Mitsunaga, Shigeta, and Hamada guilty of conspiracy in the third degree, despite an impassioned five-hour address by attorney Lightfoot on behalf of the Higher Wage leaders. On 22 August, the court sentenced the men to ten months in prison and a fine of \$300 dollars. In the appeals filed by Lightfoot with the District Court and Supreme Court of Hawai'i, the justices sustained the original verdict on 20 March in the following year, and the defendants entered the O'ahu Prison in Iwilei to serve their sentences.<sup>96</sup>

As he walked into a building that was "extremely antiquated" and "old, dirty and unsanitary," Soga remembered being assailed by an "indescribable feeling of loneliness."<sup>97</sup> Each prisoner was placed in solitary confinement and had only a bucket to use as a chamber pot. Originally, these prisoners could not leave their cells except to receive three daily meals. They could only read at night "standing beside the door-window" to catch the light from the jail corridor. Officials eventually relaxed restrictions and the men undertook various jobs in the jail, such as polishing brass, weeding the prison garden, and cleaning the office of the head jailer. Prison fare mainly consisted of "poi, salmon, beef and pork," but, as Soga noted, "from the day we entered jail until the day we left, the prefectural assistance societies, together with other sympathizers, brought us three meals a day."<sup>98</sup> The portions were so generous that the strike leaders shared the food with other prisoners. Despite often bitter differences of opinion within the Japanese community during the strike, a substantial number of Japanese supported the strike leaders' actions. Supporters demonstrated their continued allegiance to the cause by supplying meals to the prisoners, ensuring that the men remained well nourished even while behind bars. Soga reported that frequent "stomach ailments" weakened Tasaka and Negoro as they served their time, but he and Makino enjoyed "good health."<sup>99</sup> However, Soga faced his own professional and personal problems as he was forced to watch helplessly as the remaining staff of the *Nippu fiji* fought off a number of hostile takeover attempts while he was incarcerated. One suspected buyer was allegedly Shiba, who sought to monopolize the Japanese press in Hawai'i with the support of the planters. Only the efforts of "Manager Kawamoto" and other officers and sympathizers rescued the company from this "critical situation."<sup>100</sup>

Soga's work on behalf of the Higher Wage Association came at great expense to his family, as he was forced to leave his sick wife and their two young children upon his sentencing. "The thing that saddened me the most," Soga reported, "was my sick wife and two children," who were left alone without any means of support.<sup>101</sup> Through the "kindness of many friends," his wife's health continued to improve but her doctors recommended that she return to Japan to seek additional treatment. Accompanied by the deputy head jailer, Soga was allowed to see his wife and children as they boarded a ship in Honolulu Harbor bound for Japan. Only at this time did he recognize the "extreme seriousness" of his wife's illness. As his wife departed, he resigned himself to "never meeting her alive," a premonition fulfilled soon after when he received word of his wife's death.

This sad news reached Soga just as he was notified that Acting Governor E. A. Mott-Smith had signed a special pardon on 4 July 1910, commuting the sentences of the strike leaders to time served. This surprising development resulted from the combined efforts of both Japanese and white community leaders, who secured the endorsement of J. B. Cooke, president of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association.<sup>102</sup> It is difficult to determine the reason behind Cooke's unexpected support for reducing the prison sentences of the strike leaders. Soga reported that Cooke had asserted "he did not desire to further oppress the four leaders of the wage increase issue, who had simply fought for their principles."<sup>103</sup> In addition, nearly a year had passed since the strike had been called off in a meeting on 5 August 1909, attended by representatives from all the islands. This more conciliatory stance echoed in some of the concessions the planters had made to the workers at that time, such as an improvement in living conditions, the establishment of a merit pay system, an increase in contract payments to cane growers, and the institution of a turnout bonus system whereby laborers were obligated to work a certain number of days before they were eligible for a bonus. According to Negoro's estimates, these benefits totaled at least \$500,000 in payments to contract cane growers and \$20,000 in bonuses to ordinary laborers.<sup>104</sup> In 1912, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association also announced an increase of \$2 in the basic pay of ordinary laborers, raising minimum wages to \$20 per month, in addition to what could be earned in a bonus system based on the market price of sugar.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE STRIKE AND ITS "INDISPUTABLE TRUTH"<sup>105</sup>

The impact of the 1909 strike continued to reverberate in the years after the conspiracy trial and the release of the strike leaders. The attempted murder of Shiba for his collusion with planter interests during this labor conflict came to represent the violent tendencies and disorderly conduct of those in the Japanese population who intended to overthrow the existing political, social, and economic hierarchy. Nearly a decade later, officials raised concerns about another Japanese "conspiracy" to seize control of the Hawaiian Islands in the 1920 strike, which involved Japanese and Filipino laborers in the first inter-ethnic labor movement.<sup>106</sup> White political and economic leaders used these strikes as a means of disenfranchising Japanese leaders, who were denied due process and equal treatment under the law, thereby weakening the ethnic and labor leadership. Allegations of Japanese criminality likewise continued to circulate in the white community as a means of discrediting Japanese claims of economic and political discrimination. Planters and territorial officials couched Japanese activism in terms of national allegiance and associated the strike as part of a strategy by the Japanese emperor to seize control of the sugar industry and Hawai'i. Prosecutor Kinney expressed his personal belief that this strike and the ensuing labor agitation by Japanese workers were parts of a larger plot by the Japanese to control agricultural production in Hawai'i, similar to what had occurred in California, where "large communities of Japanese in certain of the valleys of California have control and possession and virtually own very large areas of land once occupied and worked by white labor."<sup>107</sup> According to Kinney, "in our investigation, however, before even the strike was declared we . . . reali[z]ed that the strike was secondarily an economic one." Kinney charged that "the real motive and purpose in back of the movement was racial and political . . . to confiscate the bulk of the wealth and earning power of these plantation properties" so that, "if not actually owned by the Japanese," the plantations would have been "virtually so."<sup>108</sup> Some individuals who feared that Hawai'i would become a "Japanese colony" supported the immediate eviction of the Japanese."<sup>109</sup> Collectively, these events tapped into existing anti-Asian sentiment and national fears of the "yellow peril" that seemed to be realized in the labor conflicts of the early twentieth century.<sup>110</sup>

Such charges and threats against the Japanese illuminated the fear-driven and shared interests of select white business and political leaders who attempted to control the Japanese first through the plantation labor system and secondly through the legal system. As defense attorney Lightfoot emphasized in his final address to the jury, the prosecution's case was essentially carried out by the HSPA's lawyers, resulting in the judicial branch of the government operating at the behest of private interests. Subsequently, it became difficult to determine if prosecutors were acting on behalf of "the Territory of Hawaii or the Planters' Association."<sup>111</sup> In his closing statements, Lightfoot asserted that "these men are being persecuted" not because of an actual conspiracy, but because of "having engineered a strike."

Collusion also occurred between Japanese consular officials and the planters, as well as among select editors of the Japanese and English-language presses, to discredit Japanese labor protests and to ensure a stable workforce. The planters not only controlled the largest white-owned newspapers in the Territory—the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and the *Honolulu Advertiser*—but also influenced many of the "conservative" Japanese papers that condemned the strike, such as the *Hawaii Shinpo* and *Hawaii Nichi Nichi Shinbun*. According to Yoshi-goro Kimura of the *Nichi Nichi*, the editors of both the *Shinpo* and *Nichi Nichi* had received \$100 monthly from the HSPA. Beginning in April 1909, a month prior to the strike, they took in "a considerable amount in addition to the \$100," totaling in some instances \$2,000.<sup>112</sup> While the 1909 strike was the largest labor movement at that time involving Japanese, not all Japanese agreed with the aims of the strike and some sacrificed community interests and ethnic solidarity for their own personal gain. The planters skillfully exploited differences within the Japanese community while emphasizing the ethnic character of the strike to weaken support among the Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, and Hawaiian populations in Hawai'i. The planters successfully employed the strategy of "divide and rule" to alienate the Japanese from other ethnic workers and to weaken the Japanese community from within by pitting Japanese against Japanese and charging the strike leaders with crimes against fellow workers.<sup>113</sup> The HSPA also distanced the strikers from larger community support and hired strikebreakers from different racial groups to break the morale and the ethnic solidarity of the Japanese.

Although the white oligarchy that controlled Hawai‘i proved generally hostile to labor movements, not all whites agreed with the tactics adopted by the HSPA or were cowed by the planters’ extensive political, social, and economic influence. Both whites and Japanese stayed active in the movement to commute the sentences of the strike leaders once they were incarcerated at O‘ahu Prison. One of the most significant supporters of the strike leaders was Lightfoot, who had worked tirelessly on behalf of the Japanese defendants in both the riot and the conspiracy cases. Neither were all Japanese innocent, as some committed criminal acts, such as Tomokichi Mori, who freely admitted that he had attacked Shiba. Others engaged in illegal activity as labor spies and accepted bribes from the planters to print favorable newspaper accounts of the planters while condemning the Higher Wage Association and its leaders. Thus, designations of criminal activity and justice remained highly fluid as these “dangerous” Japanese images could be used to empower the planters as well as criminalize and marginalize Japanese. Many of these crimes lacked simple designations of victim or perpetrator and were often committed to correct perceived community injustices as well as to address personal grievances. Often these crimes left open the possibility of some justice for the Japanese and some propriety on the part of white authorities regarding Japanese crimes and subversion.

The extent to which both sides attempted to arouse favorable public sentiment and support—in other words, the extent to which both sides worked to control the narrative of Japanese intentions in Hawai‘i—suggested the significance of the strike in Hawaiian history and its repercussions for both America and Japan. While the 1909 strike originated from worker complaints over low pay and poor housing conditions, it inevitably reflected more than just economic issues, as it represented a challenge to the political and social system of Hawai‘i supported by the plantations. It also eventually involved the Japanese and American governments, which closely monitored the situation due to their mutual desire for a stable and compliant Japanese labor force, which had been the intent behind the 1907 Gentleman’s Agreement Act ending Japanese migration to Hawai‘i and the United States.

The 1909 strike offered planters the opportunity to develop strategies to suppress future labor movements, such as employing strike-

breakers, further applying the tactic of “divide and rule,” alleging Japanese criminality, and convicting Japanese leaders within a legal system biased against ethnic minorities. Although the planters succeeded in breaking the strike, the brief unrest of this period sparked change in the industry. According to Beechert, “workers had demonstrated an ability they were deemed not to possess” as they challenged racial, economic, and legal discrimination, often at great personal sacrifice.<sup>114</sup> Most striking workers struggled to support their families while calling for reforms of the industries, and some found it difficult to find later employment due to their participation in the strike.<sup>115</sup> At the same time, the leaders of the movement faced constant harassment by police and had to fight being charged with various crimes. Their participation in the strike often came at great financial and personal sacrifice. Soga, for example, arguably suffered some of the worst violations of his civil rights and endured some of the greatest personal losses as he was unable to be at his wife’s side during her dying days or to care for their two children.

The efforts of the planters to control the ethnic press ultimately resulted in a lack of credibility for the “conservative” Japanese-language newspapers, particularly the *Hawaii Shimpō* that the *Advertiser* highlighted in a full-page laudatory spread, entitled “Making of a Japanese Paper” in 1910.<sup>116</sup> After a former reporter of the *Shimpō* alleged that planters had bribed the paper in October 1912, Soga reported that “in the post offices of all the islands the unopened Nichi Nichi and Hawaii Shimpō were piled up like mountains” as “no one would touch them.”<sup>117</sup> Eventually, editor Shiba of the *Hawaii Shimpō* returned to Japan in 1917. He died at the age of eighty at his country home in Ibara prefecture, infamously known for having “sold his support to the planters for cash.”<sup>118</sup>

Japanese labor and political activism persisted in the decades leading up to World War II as the Japanese population demanded equal political and economic rights. The strike experience honed the organizational and leadership skills of select individuals within the Japanese community and they remained active in various causes affecting the Japanese, including the Japanese-language school controversy, the fight for citizenship rights, continued labor disputes, and sensational Japanese criminal cases. Two men in particular, Soga and Makino, emerged as leading figures in the Japanese community and in the



Japanese-language presses as the respective editors of the *Nippu Jiji* and the *Hawaii Hoki*. They challenged the planters on issues related to the Japanese, such as the 1920 strike, and participated in debates with one another in the Japanese press. The Japanese-language newspapers played a significant role in the community, often to the dismay of the planters, by offering an alternative point of view and a counter narrative of Japanese mayhem and violence so prominently trumpeted in the white-dominated press. Ironically, years later and on the occasion of his death, the *Honolulu Advertiser* chose to recognize Soga's fifty-seven years of service and his role as the "patriarch" of Hawai'i's Japanese newspapers, elevating the reputation of a man it had once tried to destroy.<sup>119</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Walter G. Smith, "Violence and Press Incendiarism," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 27 May 1909: 4.
- <sup>2</sup> "Higher Wage Fanatic Attacks and Stabs Editor of the Shinpo," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 4 August 1909: 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Take Beekman and Allan Beekman, "Hawaii's Great Japanese Strike," *Pacific Citizen* 23 December 1960: Section B-23.
- <sup>4</sup> Sometaro Shiba's name is spelled a number of different ways within various accounts. His name is properly spelled "Shiba," not "Sheba," but misspellings in citations will not be corrected.
- <sup>5</sup> "Higher Wage Fanatic Attacks and Stabs Editor of the Shinpo," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 4 August 1909: 1.
- <sup>6</sup> "Honokaa Murder Case," *Hawaiian Gazette* 20 May 1890, 1; Fumiko Kaya, *Katsu Goto: The First Immigrant from Japan* (Honolulu: n.p., 1988).
- <sup>7</sup> Ernest Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii* (Honolulu: The Toyo Shoin, 1938) 169.
- <sup>8</sup> John E. Reinecke, *Labor Disturbances In Hawaii, 1890-1925: A Summary* (n.p.: Honolulu, 1966) 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 169; Helen Geracimos Chapin, *Shaping History: The Role of Newspapers in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996) 118-119.
- <sup>10</sup> Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 169.
- <sup>11</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii, 1910* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911) 62.
- <sup>12</sup> Shunzo Sakamaki, "A History of the Japanese Press in Hawaii" (master's thesis, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1928) 42.
- <sup>13</sup> Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985) 169.

- <sup>14</sup> Chapin, *Shaping History*, 120.
- <sup>15</sup> Center of Labor Education and Research. University of Hawai'i at West Oahu. C.L.E.A.R. Resource Room. Edward Beechert Files. "Seisaku Kawahara 1909 Strike Hilo, April 1966," 3.
- <sup>16</sup> "Seisaku Kawahara 1909 Strike Hilo," 3.
- <sup>17</sup> Chapin, *Shaping History*, 120.
- <sup>18</sup> Chapin, *Shaping History*, 121.
- <sup>19</sup> Sakamaki, 42.
- <sup>20</sup> Beekman and Beekman, "Hawaii's Great Japanese Strike," B-3.
- <sup>21</sup> Beekman and Beekman, "Hawaii's Great Japanese Strike," B-3.
- <sup>22</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 64.
- <sup>23</sup> James H. Okahata, ed., *A History of Japanese in Hawaii* (Honolulu: The United Japanese Society of Hawaii, 1971) 173.
- <sup>24</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 83.
- <sup>25</sup> Okahata, *A History of Japanese in Hawaii*, 174.
- <sup>26</sup> Okahata, *A History of Japanese in Hawaii*, 174.
- <sup>27</sup> Walter G. Smith, "The General Strike," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 29 May 1909: 4.
- <sup>28</sup> Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 172.
- <sup>29</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 69.
- <sup>30</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 69.
- <sup>31</sup> *Labor Conditions in Hawaii: Letter from the Secretary of Labor Transmitting the Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor Statistics on Labor Conditions in the Territory of Hawaii for the Year 1915* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 119-175.
- <sup>32</sup> Beekman and Beekman, "Hawaii's Great Japanese Strike," B-2.
- <sup>33</sup> Beekman and Beekman, "Hawaii's Great Japanese Strike," B-2.
- <sup>34</sup> Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 173.
- <sup>35</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 11-12.
- <sup>36</sup> Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 172.
- <sup>37</sup> Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 179.
- <sup>38</sup> "Uyeno Urges Men to Go to Work," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 19 July 1909: 1.
- <sup>39</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 86.
- <sup>40</sup> "Jiji Bitterly Attacks Uyeno," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 5 July 1909: 2.
- <sup>41</sup> "Makino Crowd Abusing Uyeno," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 30 May 1909: 1.
- <sup>42</sup> Okahata, *A History of Japanese in Hawaii*, 177.
- <sup>43</sup> "Sheriff Henry Makes a Raid on a Jap Theater," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 7 June 1905: 1.
- <sup>44</sup> *Third Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906) 41.
- <sup>45</sup> *Third Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1905, 43.
- <sup>46</sup> Dorothy Ochiai Hazama and Jane Okamoto Komeiji, *Okage Same De: The Japanese in Hawai'i 1885-1985* (Honolulu: Bess Press, 1986) 43; *Third Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906) 40-45; *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 26-27.

- <sup>47</sup> Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 172; Yasutaro Soga, “Planters Hound Strike Leaders,” *Honolulu Record* 25 August 1949: 7.
- <sup>48</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioner of Labor on Hawaii*, 1910, 97.
- <sup>49</sup> Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 175.
- <sup>50</sup> Okahata, *A History of Japanese in Hawaii*, 179.
- <sup>51</sup> Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 173.
- <sup>52</sup> Beekman and Beekman, “Hawaii’s Great Japanese Strike,” B-6.
- <sup>53</sup> Beekman and Beekman, “Hawaii’s Great Japanese Strike,” B-6.
- <sup>54</sup> “How a Loyal Laborer Was Mobbed by the Thugs,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 26 May 1909: 1.
- <sup>55</sup> “How a Loyal Laborer Was Mobbed by the Thugs,” 1; Beekman and Beekman, “Hawaii’s Great Japanese Strike,” B-6.
- <sup>56</sup> “Urges Contractors to Keep at Work on Their Fields of Cane,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 27 May 1909: 1.
- <sup>57</sup> Smith, “Violence and Press Incendiarism,” 4.
- <sup>58</sup> “First Witness in Riot Trial,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 26 June 1909: 1.
- <sup>59</sup> “Show Rioters Attacked Man,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 28 June 1909: 5.
- <sup>60</sup> “Wills Tells about Riot,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 2 July 1909: 5.
- <sup>61</sup> “Wills Tells about Riot,” 5.
- <sup>62</sup> “Officers with Drawn Revolvers Hold Angry Mob at Bay at Waipahu,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 9 June 1909: 1.
- <sup>63</sup> “Show Rioters Attacked Man,” 5.
- <sup>64</sup> “Japanese Mob Holds Three Men Prisoners in Honolulu,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 5 July 1909: 1.
- <sup>65</sup> “Consul Would Not See Him,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 6 July 1909: 1.
- <sup>66</sup> “First Witness in Riot Trial,” 1.
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- <sup>69</sup> *The Territory of Hawaii v. Y. Tasaka, K. Kawamura, and M. Negoro*. Criminal 4604. 1.
- <sup>70</sup> *The Territory of Hawaii v. Y. Tasaka, K. Kawamura, and M. Negoro*. Criminal 4604. 1.
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- <sup>75</sup> Yasutaro Soga, “Planters-Police Collusion . . . 1909,” *Honolulu Record* 8 July 1949: 8.
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- <sup>77</sup> Soga, “The Government Authorities’ Unlawful Suppression,” 7.

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- <sup>79</sup> "Statement of W.A. Kinney, re Japanese Strike." Hawai'i State Archives. Frear-U.S. Depts. Interior-August-December 1909 Govt 3-7.
- <sup>80</sup> Hawai'i State Archives. Frear- U.S. Depts. Interior-August-December 1909 Govt 3-7.
- <sup>81</sup> Hawai'i State Archives. Frear- U.S. Depts. Interior-August-December 1909 Govt 3-7.
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- <sup>84</sup> Yasutaro Soga, "The Strike Agitation Case Trial," *Honolulu Times* 4 August 1949: 19.
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- <sup>99</sup> Soga, "Strike Leaders in Jail—1909," *Honolulu Record* 1 September 1949: 7.
- <sup>100</sup> Yasutaro Soga, "Strike Leaders in Jail—1909," *Honolulu Record* 15 September 1949: 8; Okahata, *A History of Japanese in Hawaii*, 181.
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- <sup>103</sup> Soga, "Strike Leaders in Jail—1909," *Honolulu Record* 15 September 1949: 7; Yasutaro Soga, "Turning Point in 1909 Strike," *Honolulu Record* 18 August 1949: 8.
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- <sup>105</sup> Yasutaro Soga, "Strike Broken But Objective Won," *Honolulu Record* 29 September 1949: 8.
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